



AQUINNAH

(previously knows as Gay Head)

Dukes County



[NARRATIVE](#)
[GEOGRAPHY](#)
[GOVERNMENT](#)
[DEMOGRAPHICS](#)
[HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS](#)
[TRANSPORTATION](#)
[CULTURE AND RECREATION](#)
[MISCELLANEOUS](#)



NARRATIVE

Narrative

The Town of Aquinnah (previously knows as Gay Head) is unique in being the only community in Massachusetts that continues to have a substantial Indian presence in the 20th century, a presence that continued right through the disruptions and disasters of King Philip's War. The Indians of Aquinnah (previously knows as Gay Head) are thought by some to be related to the mainland Wampanoag tribe, but the natives themselves have a mythic story that describes their arrival on Martha's Vineyard floating on an ice flow from the far North. Whichever way they arrived, their history has been very different from that of mainland tribes.

In contrast to the massacres and bloodshed in other communities during King Philip's War when many settlers abandoned their towns altogether as a result of the threat or the reality of Indian attack, in Aquinnah (previously knows as Gay Head), white settlers armed their Indian neighbors and made them the sentries and guards to warn of possible attacking tribes. This responsibility the Indians of Aquinnah (previously knows as Gay Head) carried out faithfully and there was very little if any damage done in the town during those turbulent times. The most outstanding natural feature of Aquinnah (previously knows as Gay Head) is the magnificent display of varicolored clay cliffs in strange formations which spill down to the sea on the border of the town. These cliffs marked the homeward leg of Gay Head's Indian and Yankee fishermen and whalers. The European settlers learned from their Indian neighbors the skills needed for coast-wise whaling and Aquinnahers (previously knows as Gay Head) maintained a shore fishing fleet. From the early 17th century to the last day an American whaler sailed, Aquinnah (previously knows as Gay Head) Indians and Yankees were prominent in whaling. Although much of their fishing and whaling was done in small boats close to shore, Aquinnahers (previously knows as Gay Headers) also sailed with whalers of the Nantucket and New Bedford fleets. The Aquinnah (previously knows as Gay Head) cliffs have also been a source of clay for pottery and of myriads of fossils which show the variety of animal and marine life in earlier ages of the island. The town's history starts very early, since Bartholomew Gosnold sailed into Aquinnah (previously knows as Gay Head) in 1602 and traded for furs with the Indians of the town. Gosnold filled his boat with beaver and muskrat, sassafras and cedar before sailing back to England. When the town was incorporated in 1870, it had already been named an Indian reservation and had established its maritime economy.

(Seal supplied by community. Narrative compiled from historical materials)



GEOGRAPHY

Location

Located on the western tip of Martha's Vineyard, an island 20 miles long and 10 miles wide situated five miles south of the southwest tip of Cape Cod. Aquinnah (previously known as Gay Head) is bordered by Chilmark on the east and the Atlantic Ocean on the north, west, and south.

Total Area: 40.78 sq. miles

Land Area: 5.37 sq. miles

Population: 201

Density: 37 per sq. mile

Climate

(National Climatic Data Center)

(Edgartown Station)

Normal temperature in January.....29.3°F

Normal temperature in July.....69.8°F

Normal annual precipitation.....45.3"

U.S.G.S. Topographical Plates

Squibnocket, Naushon Island

Regional Planning Agency

Martha's Vineyard

Metropolitan Statistical Area

(1993 Definition)



GOVERNMENT

Municipal Offices

Main Number: (508) 645-9915

[Telephone Numbers for Public Information](#)

Form of Government

Board of Selectmen

Executive Secretary

Open Town Meeting

Year Incorporated

As a town: 1870

Registered Voters (Secretary of State 1994)

	Number	%
--	--------	---

Total Registered 231

Democrats 63 27.3 % Republicans 12 5.2 % Other parties 0 0.0 % Unenrolled Voters 156 67.5 %

Legislators

[Senators and Representatives by City and Town](#)



DEMOGRAPHICS

Table DP-1. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000

Geographic Area: Aquinnah town, Dukes County, Massachusetts

[For information on confidentiality protection, nonsampling error, and definitions, see text]

Subject	Number	Percent	Subject	Number	Percent
Total population.....	344	100.0	HISPANIC OR LATINO AND RACE		
SEX AND AGE			Total population.....	344	100.0
Male.....	169	49.1	Hispanic or Latino (of any race).....	4	1.2
Female.....	175	50.9	Mexican.....	1	0.3
Under 5 years.....	20	5.8	Puerto Rican.....	-	-
5 to 9 years.....	31	9.0	Cuban.....	-	-
10 to 14 years.....	19	5.5	Other Hispanic or Latino.....	3	0.9
15 to 19 years.....	25	7.3	Not Hispanic or Latino.....	340	98.8
20 to 24 years.....	22	6.4	White alone.....	182	52.9
25 to 34 years.....	42	12.2	RELATIONSHIP		
35 to 44 years.....	67	19.5	Total population.....	344	100.0
45 to 54 years.....	62	18.0	In households.....	344	100.0
55 to 59 years.....	10	2.9	Householder.....	141	41.0
60 to 64 years.....	11	3.2	Spouse.....	54	15.7
65 to 74 years.....	20	5.8	Child.....	113	32.8
75 to 84 years.....	10	2.9	Own child under 18 years.....	83	24.1
85 years and over.....	5	1.5	Other relatives.....	15	4.4
Median age (years).....	37.1	(X)	Under 18 years.....	3	0.9
18 years and over.....	257	74.7	Nonrelatives.....	21	6.1
Male.....	118	34.3	Unmarried partner.....	11	3.2
Female.....	199	40.4	In group quarters.....	-	-
21 years and over.....	244	70.9	Institutionalized population.....	-	-
62 years and over.....	45	13.1	Noninstitutionalized population.....	-	-
65 years and over.....	35	10.2	HOUSEHOLD BY TYPE		
Male.....	15	4.4	Total households.....	141	100.0
Female.....	20	5.8	Family households (families).....	89	63.1
RACE			With own children under 18 years.....	47	33.3
One race.....	314	91.3	Married-couple family.....	54	38.3
White.....	184	53.5	With own children under 18 years.....	27	19.1
Black or African American.....	1	0.3	Female householder, no husband present.....	25	17.7
American Indian and Alaska Native.....	126	36.6	With own children under 18 years.....	16	11.3
Asian.....	-	-	Nonfamily households.....	52	36.9
Asian Indian.....	-	-	Householder living alone.....	43	30.5
Chinese.....	-	-	Householder 65 years and over.....	11	7.8
Filipino.....	-	-	Households with individuals under 18 years.....	49	34.8
Japanese.....	-	-	Households with individuals 65 years and over.....	28	19.9
Korean.....	-	-	Average household size.....	2.44	(X)
Vietnamese.....	-	-	Average family size.....	3.04	(X)
Other Asian ¹	-	-	HOUSING OCCUPANCY		
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander.....	-	-	Total housing units.....	463	100.0
Native Hawaiian.....	-	-	Occupied housing units.....	141	30.5
Guamanian or Chamorro.....	-	-	Vacant housing units.....	322	69.5
Samoa.....	-	-	For seasonal, recreational, or		
Other Pacific Islander ²	-	-	occasional use.....	308	66.5
Some other race.....	3	0.9	Homeowner vacancy rate (percent).....	3.5	(X)
Two or more races.....	30	8.7	Rental vacancy rate (percent).....	6.5	(X)
<i>Race alone or in combination with one</i>			HOUSING TENURE		
<i>or more other races: ³</i>			Occupied housing units.....	141	100.0
White.....	207	60.2	Owner-occupied housing units.....	83	58.9
Black or African American.....	17	4.9	Renter-occupied housing units.....	58	41.1
American Indian and Alaska Native.....	148	43.0	Average household size of owner-occupied units.....	2.35	(X)
Asian.....	1	0.3	Average household size of renter-occupied units.....	2.57	(X)
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander.....	-	-			
Some other race.....	11	3.2			

- Represents zero or rounds to zero. (X) Not applicable.

¹ Other Asian alone, or two or more Asian categories.

² Other Pacific Islander alone, or two or more Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander categories.

³ In combination with one or more of the other races listed. The six numbers may add to more than the total population and the six percentages may add to more than 100 percent because individuals may report more than one race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000.



HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

Home Sales (Banker & Tradesman) -

[Town Stats - Free market Statistics](#)

Subsidized Housing Units (DHCD 1998)

[DHCD Subsidized Housing Inventory](#)

Subsidized Housing Units: The number of housing units which count toward the municipality's 10% goal for low- and moderate-income housing. It includes both subsidized affordable units and market rate units in certain eligible subsidized developments.

Public Housing Units (DHCD 1999)

Conventional State:	0
Conventional Federal:	0

Rental Assistance(DHCD 1999)

State (MRVP:	0
Federal (Section 8):	0



TRANSPORTATION

TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESS

Aquinnah (previously known as Gay Head) is located on Martha's Vineyard. Ferry service is the vital link to and from the Island. The Wood's Hole, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket Steamship Authority provides year-round ferry service.

Major Highways

The principal highways are State Road and the Edgartown-West Tisbury Road.

Rail

There is no freight or passenger rail service on Martha's Vineyard.

Bus

Aquinnah (previously known as Gay Head) is a member of the Martha's Vineyard Transit Authority (MVTA). The MVTA provides paratransit services to the elderly and disabled, primarily through Elder Services of Cape Cod and the Islands. Island Transport provides fixed route bus service to other towns on the island during the tourist season. Taxicabs are an integral part of the Island's public transportation system.

Other

Martha's Vineyard Airport is a Primary Commercial Service (PR) facility with scheduled passenger service. It has a 3,297'x 150' asphalt runway and a 5,499'x 150' asphalt runway. Instrument approaches available: Precision and non-precision. Also accessible is the Katama Airpark, a privately owned public use facility in Edgartown.



CULTURE AND RECREATION

LIBRARIES

[Board of Library Commissioners On-line Library Catalog](#)

(American Association of Museums)

None

MUSEUMS

RECREATION

[Telephone Numbers for Public Information](#)

Recreational Facilities (Recreational sites and activities)

[Department of Environmental Management Recreation Section](#)



MISCELLANEOUS

HEALTH FACILITIES

(Dept. of Public Health 1992)

Hospitals

None

Long Term Care

None

Hospices

None

Rest Homes

None

UTILITIES

[Telephone Numbers for Public Utilities](#)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Department of Housing and Community Development would like to thank the many government agencies noted as having provided information for the community profiles. In addition to these agencies, the Regional Transit Authorities assisted with the transportation component of the profiles. We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of many city and town officials, which enabled us to include information obtainable only at the local level. DHCD would also like to thank the following individuals for providing special help: Leslie A. Kirwan, Deputy Commissioner, Division of Local Services, Department of Revenue; Richard Shibley, Deputy Secretary of State; Bob Beattie of the Department of Public Health; Charles W. Clifford from the Martha's Vineyard Commission; Dennis Coffey of the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction; Donna Fletcher and Christian Jacqz of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs; James Griffin from the MBTA; Karen Loh from Banker & Tradesman; Todd Maio from the Department of Welfare; Geoffrey Morton from the Election Division of the Secretary of State's Office; Stephen R. Muench of the Massachusetts Aeronautics Commission; Rol Murrow of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association; Mary Ann Neary and Emmanuelle Fletcher, reference librarians at the State House Library; Jeff Nellhaus from the Department of Education; and George Sanborn, reference librarian at the State Transportation Library.

NOTE: The COMMUNITY PROFILE draws information from a diversity of sources. The main source of information is listed under each section. In some instances comments submitted by the municipality were incorporated to correct and/or enhance the information obtained from the main source. However, no changes were made to those data bases which must be consistent throughout the state. DHCD has made efforts to ensure the accuracy of all data in the COMMUNITY PROFILES, but cannot take responsibility for any consequences arising from the use of the information contained in this document.